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What They Are Saying: EPA and Stakeholders' Agreement To Achieve Faster and More Complete Cleanup of Housatonic River in Berkshire County

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LENEX, Mass. – Today, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Regional Administrator Dennis Deziel and local officials and stakeholders unveiled an agreement to expand and expedite cleaning the "Rest of River" portion of the Housatonic River in western Massachusetts. The agreement will result in a faster and more comprehensive removal of contaminated sediment from the river, addresses many concerns raised by citizens and local officials, and will provide major economic benefits for communities in Berkshire County. Here's what elected officials and stakeholders are saying...

State of Connecticut

"Connecticut has a strong interest in the expeditious removal of PCBs from the Housatonic River. The proposed clean-up will benefit the river ecosystem, the species that rely on the river, and all citizens of the Housatonic River Valley from Pittsfield to Long Island Sound," **said Katie Dykes, Commissioner of Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Conservation.** "We are pleased there is a significant step forward being taken today."

Attorney General William Tong: "After years of negotiation and mediation, this settlement continues to hold General Electric accountable for a prompt and effective clean-up of the Housatonic River impacted by PCB contamination from GE's Pittsfield, Massachusetts plant. We are pleased this agreement addresses our biota and downstream transport concerns and includes additional PCB testing, erosion impact evaluation, and potential adjacent floodplain removal, as well as

provisions regarding future work. We will continue to closely monitor all required work with our partners at DEEP, EPA and in Massachusetts to ensure the health and safety of this important river."

City of Pittsfield

"The City of Pittsfield is pleased to be a part of this landmark partnership that, through mutual commitments by all parties, has resolved a 20-year quandary between GE and the EPA. With this settlement agreement, we will embark on a comprehensive and protective cleanup of the Housatonic River that will restore the river for present and future generations, while minimizing disruption to nearby neighborhoods in the city. Additionally, the agreement will result in the cleanup of residential properties and yield multiple investments that will support the ongoing revitalization of the Tyler Street area, as well future economic development initiatives in the city. As a whole, the settlement agreement symbolizes a collaborative effort that has resulted in a very real and viable solution toward the restoration of one of Berkshire County's most prized natural gems, and has the potential to be used as a model in addressing similar matters of environmental contamination."

Town of Lee

"As a mother, a grandmother and, god willing, someday a great grandmother - I want to be able to say I'm leaving the future generations of not only my own family but those families of our community with a cleaner safer Housatonic River and this settlement accomplishes that goal." – **Patricia Carlino, Lee Select Board**

Town of Lenox

"The partners in this mediation are reaching the end of a long, fraught, and deliberative process that I know our committee views with pride and relief. If EPA had not provided us this opportunity for mediation — and had not GE changed their attitude and direction, had they not stepped up to the table with a new willingness to negotiate — Pittsfield and the five Towns would be facing a potential nightmare of litigation and the cleanup that resulted. All of us wish the river had never been poisoned, but we now have the best chance we have had to mitigate that sad reality and launch a better future for our river communities." – **Channing Gibson, Town of Lenox**

Town of Stockbridge

"Most of us emphasized the community commitment to the river and to each other. That spirit is what I will long remember and what our towns should hear more of." – **Steve Shatz, Stockbridge**

Town of Great Barrington

"The Town of Great Barrington enthusiastically supports this Settlement Agreement. After many decades of wondering if, how, and when the Rest of River would be cleaned up, we now have a path forward to accomplish this important project. With this Agreement, the Rest of River Towns have achieved a better cleanup than many thought possible, and we have achieved important additional benefits for our communities. In Great Barrington we will see the Rising Pond site preserved, and we now hope that the Rising Mill can be fully utilized to meet our Town's economic development goals." – **Christopher Rembold, Great Barrington Assistant Town Manager Director of Planning and Community Development**

Town of Sheffield

"When told the EAB hadn't ruled in favor of the EPA and required GE to send all PCB contamination out of state, I wondered how the five Rest of River towns, with a combined population of less than 25,000, would ever protect the health of our communities and the environment. However EAB eventually ruled, I knew we would have to fight GE through the appeal process, and given the political climate, the courts and potential costs, what were our chances of winning? When EPA Region 1 proposed mediation, I never envisioned what we have in fact collectively accomplished - we have protected our communities and the environment, our first priority. Every step of the way, we made decisions we felt were in the best interests of our collective towns. We have made sure the most contaminated PCB soils and sediments will be identified, isolated and go out of state. We have achieved a better and more thorough cleanup. We, and our residents, will be involved when cleanup decisions are made and we have gotten significant economic benefits for our residents. Not everyone will be pleased but those who are not need to realize we could have ended up with three landfills holding all the PCB contaminants and none of these benefits." – **Rene Wood, Sheffield Select Board**

General Electric Corp.

"This agreement makes good on our longstanding commitment to a comprehensive cleanup of the Housatonic Rest of River that fully protects the environment. This plan brings certainty to the parties, exceeds the cleanup requirements of the Consent Decree, and provides local communities with additional financial and land resources for development. We look forward to working with our partners to implement this project without delay." – **Roger Martella, Director, Environment, Health & Safety, GE**

Berkshire Environmental Action Team

"We feel that this agreement is our best opportunity to have a much more thorough remediation to protect the environment for wildlife," **said Jane Winn, Executive Director of Berkshire Environmental Action Team (BEAT)**. "We are pleased that there will be a pilot study of vernal pool remediation. Amphibians who use vernal pools for breeding appear to be especially sensitive to PCBs, so we feel it is important to remediate these unique habitats carefully."

Massachusetts Audubon Society

"We feel this mediation agreement is the most protective option with regard to both human health and the environment," **said Gary Clayton, President of Mass Audubon**, the state's largest nature conservation nonprofit and owner of Canoe Meadows Wildlife Sanctuary in Pittsfield. "Residents who have long felt the environmental impacts of this pollution can now be assured that substantive remediation will at last begin, for people and nature."

More information on the Negotiated Agreement and EPA's efforts to address contamination in the Housatonic River: <https://www.epa.gov/ge-housatonic>

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